

Ultra-processed food products and fast food restaurant advertisements on Brazilian television

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INTRODUCTION

Brazil has experienced intense growth in the prevalence of obesity and other noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) in the last decades (DUARTE *et al.*, 2012; NG *et al.*, 2014). It is known that a significant part of this increase resulted from changes in the pattern of the food consumption in the country, with a recognized increase in the consumption of ultra-processed food products (UPP) (DUARTE *et al.*, 2012).

Much of this change is driven by sophisticated marketing strategies, especially developed by major food industries (KELLY *et al.*, 2015). Thus, the regulation of the marketing becomes an important part of a set of actions to combat obesity (WHO 2010; 2013). Food marketing surveillance, especially in mass communication channels (such as television), is imperative for the establishment of appropriate measures in the area.

OBJECTIVE

To analyze types and brands of (UPP) and fast food restaurants on Brazilian free-to-air television advertisements (ads).

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The food marketing – television monitoring protocol created by the International Network for Food and Obesity/Non-communicable Diseases (NCDs) Research, Monitoring and Action Support (INFORMAS) (KELLY *et al.*, 2013) was used for the data collection. Three free-to-air channel (most popular networks) programming was recorded from 6am to 12am, for eight days (four week days and four weekend days, excluding holidays), randomly spread during the month of April 2018. All ads broadcasted were selected and those related to UPP and fast food restaurants were identified. For each ad, information regarding its brand and type of product was identified. The participation of UPP and fast food restaurants in the total ads was explored. Brands and products were described by their participation on the ads of UPP and fast food restaurants

RESULTS

A total of 432 hours of Brazilian television programming was recorded, involving 7,991 ads (18.5 per hour). From this amount, 1,031 ads were nutrition-related (12.8%). The expressive majority of the nutrition-related ads were of UPP (90.5%), especially sweetened beverages (24.8%). A total of 30 brands of UPP were identified. Soft drink brands occupied five out of the top 10 positions, especially *Dolly* (14.3%, n=76), *Fanta* (8.2%, n=54) and *Coca-Cola* (9.6%, n=52), which responded for the top three positions. Ultra-processed meat brands also stood out, with *Sadia* (6.9%, n=41) and *Seara* (5.2%, n=25) on the top 10 list. *McDonald's* responded for two thirds of the total fast food restaurant ads (65.0%, n=62), three times more than *Burger King* (22.6%, n=21) and 10 times more than *Subway* (5.3, n=6), which completed this top three.

Table 1. Frequency of nutrition-related ads identified on the three most popular free-to-air channel on Brazilian television, according to the NOVA classification.

Food product category	%	CI 95%	
Nutrition-related ads	12.79	11.36	14.54
Unprocessed or minimally processed foods	7.85	6.12	10.01
Processed culinary ingredients	1.01	0.47	2.14
Processed foods	0.63	0.24	1.67
Ultra-processed food and drink products	90.51	88.15	92.44
Soft drinks	24.78	22.02	27.75
Dietary supplements	21.63	19.03	24.47
Nuggets, cold cuts and other ultra-processed	8.70	6.99	10.77
meat products			
Other sweetened beverages	5.58	4.29	7.25
Fast food	12.03	8.42	17.39
Others	17.80	12.31	27.34
Total	100.00		

CI: confidence interval; UPP: ultra-processed food products.

Table 2. Frequency of the UPP brands and all fast-food restaurants advertised on the three most popular free-to-air channel on Brazilian television.

Brands	n	%	CI 95%	
UPP brands				
Dolly	76	14.31	11.45	17.76
Fanta	54	8.23	6.20	10.85
Coca-Cola	52	9.63	7.30	12.62
Sadia	41	6.92	5.01	9.49
Nestlé	51	9.67	7.31	12.67
Guaraná Antarctica	35	6.45	4.58	9.03
Qualy	32	4.95	3.41	7.13
Seara	25	5.18	3.48	7.65
Pepsi	21	4.11	2.64	6.35
Frisco	18	2.07	1.27	3.38
Others	141	28.46	24.59	32.68
Total	554	100,00		
Fast food restaurants				
McDonald's	62	65.01	54.38	74.33
Burguer King	21	22.56	14.86	32.72
Subway	6	5.33	2.23	12.21
Habib's	3	2.31	0.66	7.80
Ragazzo	3	2.31	0.66	7.80
Madero	2	2.49	0.61	9.61
Total	97	100,00		

CI: confidence interval; UPP: ultra-processed food products.

CONCLUSION

Soft drinks account for the vast majority of UPP ads on free-to-air television. International brands are the biggest advertisers of UPP and fast food restaurants in the Brazilian television.

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